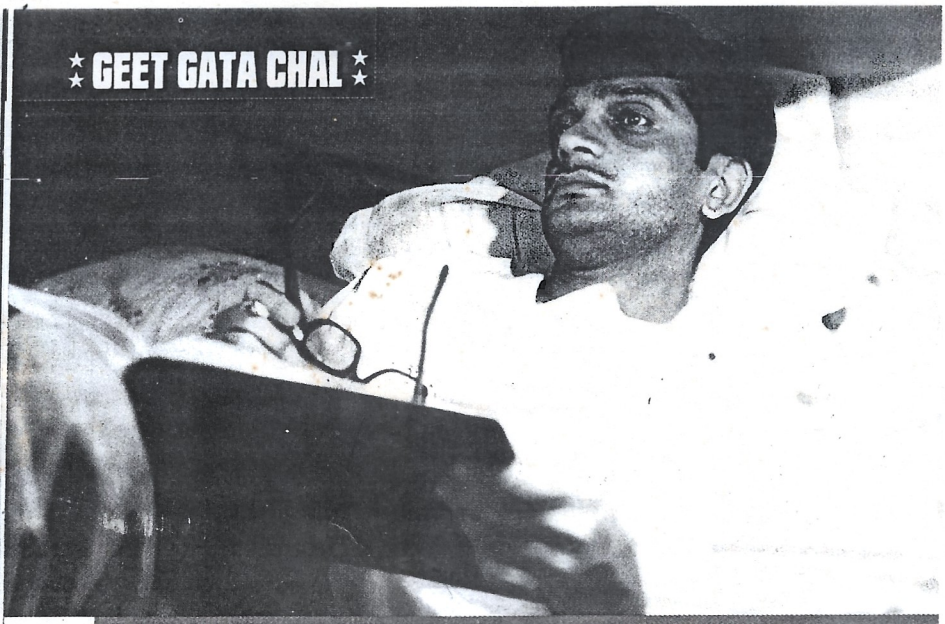

Eminent lyricist, writer and director Gulzar brings alive some of his musical memories exclusively for Filmfare

Now, what did Bimalda's 'Hmmm' mean?

BIMALDA WAS famous for his "Hmmm". Now his Hmmm had a million meanings. And it was up to us to understand what he meant. The first time I had to figure it out was when I told him I didn't like one of the songs in *Kabuliwala.*

But let me start at the beginning. I had just joined Bimal*da* as an assistant editor on *Kabuliwala.* That was the beginning of my foray into films. Salil Choudhary was to score the music for *Kabuliwala,* while Prem Dhawan was the lyricist.

After a couple of schedules, Bimal*da* sent cameraman Kamal Bose and me to Calcutta to shoot the title shots with Balraj Sahni, as well as some general shots of the Calcutta streets. By the time we returned, Bimal*da* had recorded two songs. He asked me to go to the studio and listen to them.

When I heard the songs, I didn't like the *bhajan,* which was to be sung by a *sadhu* in the film. The other song, by Manna Dey, *Aye mere pyare watan,* was simply superb. (I've often been complimented for this song, so to set the record straight, it was Prem Dhawan who wrote it.) I expressed my opinion about the *bhajan* frankly to both Bimal*da* and Prem.

I had known Prem from my IPTA days; we were honest with each other and would often exchange honest views on our creative work. When I told Bimal*da* about my reservations, he nodded his head and muttered, "Hmmm." Nothing more was said. But after a few weeks he asked me to re-write the song.

I hesitated because Prem Dhawan was a friend. But Salil*da* convinced me by telling me that Prem had asked him to get the song written by me since he was going out of town for his IPTA performances.

Salil*da,* as was his habit, had put off the job. (He would do anything but work for as long as he could.) One day I saw Rajan Tarafdaar's Bengali film *Ganga,* for which Salil*da* had composed some beautiful music. One particular song, where Sandhya Roy throws the *jaal* in the river, was so exquisite that it stayed with me—I told Salil*da, "Us gaane pe sadhuwala gana banate hain."* The lyrics went *'Amaaye doobaili re, amaaye bhaashaili re.'*

Salil*da,* who was busy playing table tennis at his house, was most relieved. *"Chalo, kaam ho gaya,"* he sighed, and packed me off with his assistant, Kanu Ghosh, to work on the song: *"Bahut achcha hai,* Gulzar, *tum Kanu ke saath baitho* music room *mein, aur bana lo."* And he continued playing TT.

Just then, Bimal*da* arrived. And Salil*da* rushed to the music room like a frightened student who runs for cover when the principal arrives on the scene. He seated himself quickly at the piano and started playing the original Bengali song. When Bimal*da* entered the room, Salil*da* pretended as if he'd been working hard on the song from morning. He appeared to be so absorbed in his music that he didn't even notice Bimal*da* standing in the room. Then, fingers running over the keys, he looked up and exclaimed, "Bimal*da*!" Talking in Bengali, he told him he was thinking of *Amaaye doobaili re* for the *sadhu* song. Bimal*da* was too sharp for him, though. He remarked sarcastically, *Doobaite gele bhaabte hoye na* (you don't have to think so much to drown someone) and left the room.

The moment Bimal*da* left, Salil*da* was back to his table tennis. He told me to sit down with Kanu again: "Gulzar, *isse* please *khatam kar do, aaj."* So I sat with Kanu and wrote *Ganga aaye kahan se, ganga jaaye kahan re.*

Incidentally, *Kabuliwala* released before *Bandini.* Which is why, though *Mora gora ang lai le* was the first song I'd written, *Ganga aaye kahan se* was the first to be released.

Gulzar spoke to ANURADHA CHOUDHARY

Ganga aaye kahan se, Ganga jaaye kahan re

Ganga aaye kahan se
Ganga jaaye kahan re
Leharaye paani mein jaise
Dhoop chhaon re

Raat kaari din ujiaara
Mil gaye dono saaye
Saanjh ne dekho rang roop ke
Kaise bhed mitaye re

Ganga aaye kahan se...

Kaanch koi, maati koi
Rang birange pyaale
Pyaas lage to ek barabar
Jis mein paani daale re

Ganga aaye kahan se...